

The Adventures of Hiccup, the Dragon Chief

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Summary: ... and his Loyal Companions; Astrid the Actual Chief, Also Known As Astrid the Amazing, and Toothless the Long-Suffering.

Alternatively: Hiccup and Toothless become the explorers they were always meant to be, and Astrid Hofferson becomes the Chief she was always meant to be. HTTYD2 SPOILERS ABOUND. Three-shot.

1. Wanderlust

There are no words for much I blame shena for this and, as you all know by know, you should blame them too.

The second part should be up within a few days, very possibly tomorrow. And don't worry, it is definitely lighter, fluffier, and funnier than this part.

Also, because this is fanfic dot net, I feel the need to clearly state the pairings that will appear in this story. Hiccstrid, Hiccup/Toothless bromance, and Astrid/Valka epic friendship will all be featured, so if any of those things rub you wrongly, turn back now.

* * *

><p>Hiccup was an honest, hard-working, and above all, good
Chief.

The first few weeks were exhausting in their activity. Hiccup organised repairs, negotiated with the new dragons (both via Toothless and on his own), settled village matters, tried to help his mother transition back to life among humans, and continued his work at the forge. He was lucky it was only newly spring; if he'd had to oversee the food preparation and storage for winter, he might not have had time to sleep.

Toothless seemed to be just as busy himself. He spent more time with the other dragons than with Hiccup, these days. Hiccup heard them

sometimes, talking in their strange, growling language. Much like he did with Toothless, he could usually glean what the conversation was about by tone and facial expression. Given this, he swore that Toothless spent the majority of his time settling disputes among the overcrowded dragon population on Berk. Which was a comfort to know, Hiccup thought as he watched two Vikings turn to him expectantly.

"Uhâ€¦" What had they been arguing about? "Phlegma, I think Hardcap is right." Immediately Phlegma frowned, and he held up a hand to stop her rebuttal. "_But_, Hardcap, if you didn't agree to a specific amount of time, Phlegma _does_ have the right to take her wheelbarrow back at any time. Alright?"

Hardcap threw up his hands and stormed away, grumbling. Phlegma watched him go with a smug expression. "Thanks, Dragon Chief," she said, then hurried after Hardcap with a satisfied swing in her steps.

"Please stop calling me that!" he called after her. "Always with the Dragon Chief," he muttered, turning back to the forge. His latest slew of saddle designs were going over well with the new dragon species who had recently made Berk their home, but he'd barely had the time to make more than one. If Toothless had been there, he could have asked him to drive off anyone looking for him, if only to get a minute or so to himself.

But Toothless wasn't there, and hadn't been for almost two days now. He hadn't even come back to his dad's â€" _his_ house, it belonged to Hiccup now â€" to sleep. And that was the worst thing of all.

In the days after the defeat of Drago's Alpha, Hiccup had repeatedly woken up with Toothless balanced on the edge of his bed, carefully curled around Hiccup in his sleep. After the third time, Hiccup had foregone his bed to settle next to Toothless on the dragon's own bed, pressed to his warm, scaly side and under his wing. It was a comfort to both of them, and they'd continued to sleep like that, a routine only broken when Toothless began spending his nights with the other dragons â€" and Hiccup _hated_ it.

"Dragon Chief!" a cheerful voice rang from outside. Hiccup paused in his cutting of leather to grit his teeth, then continued working, ignoring the familiar voice.

"Hey, Hiccup!" The newcomer obviously didn't get the message. He could hear footsteps approaching and he paused his work again, this time to clench his hands into fists. "You in there? C'mon, you're acting like _Toothless_-"

Maybe it was the mention of his absent best friend that did it, but Hiccup had suddenly had enough. "Go _away_!" he yelled, closing his eyes and shoving his hands in his hair. "Please, _please_, just- just go away." His anger disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared, and he slumped against his workbench. The footsteps came nearer, and there was a _clunk_ as the cutting saw stopped. A calloused hand brushed through his hair and he sighed, lifting his face from his hands to look Astrid in the eyes.

"Sorry," he muttered. Astrid didn't respond; just kept carding through his hair in a relaxing, repetitive motion. Hiccup closed his

eyes and let his heart rate slow, feeling Astrid start another braid. He didn't care for the braids much as a style, but he did care for how Astrid only did them when he was stressed, as a kind of quiet support. Of course, he'd been stressed so often these past few weeks, more of his hair was now in braids than not.

"You haven't flown with Toothless for ages," Astrid said reasonably once she tied off the new braid. "Almost five days."

"That's not too long," Hiccup pointed out, and Astrid shrugged.

"It is for you two. Especially for Toothless." Hiccup's mouth twisted in a grimace.

"He's busy withâ€¦ Alpha stuff," he said bitterly. Astrid punched his arm, but softly. "Ow, what was that for?" he growled.

"For being dumb," she replied, crossing her arms. "Aren't you busy with Chief stuff? He's probably as miserable as you are."

"I'm not _miserable_," Hiccup argued. Astrid punched him again, slightly harder. "Hey! Stop that!"

"You're miserable, so Toothless is probably feeling exactly the same way," she said. "Go. Fly around, have fun, have someâ€¦ bonding time. It'll do you both good," she concluded. Hiccup frowned and looked down at the leather on the bench.

"But the village-

"I'll handle it," Astrid said confidently. He stared. "What? You think I can't do a Chief's job for one day?" she demanded, eyebrows narrowed dangerously.

"No, no- I mean, of course I do," Hiccup said hastily. "You could probably do Chief duties forâ€¦ a lot longer actuallyâ€¦" Astrid tilted her head, but he shook his head and continued, "Do you think I could? Just fly away for a bit? Wouldn't people be mad?"

"Hiccup, everyone thinks you've been doing an amazing job," she said softly, again putting her hand on Hiccup's arm, but this time in a reassuring grip. "No one would blame you if you disappeared for a bit. It's a big job, taking over fromâ€¦ from your dad," she finished awkwardly. Hiccup nodded distractedly.

"Okay," he said slowly. "Okay." Suddenly he grinned, and leant forward to kiss Astrid swiftly on the cheek before rushing out of the forge, apron still on. "Thank you! I'll see you soon!" he called back, laughter in the back of his throat. He ran past squabbling Vikings and curious dragons alike, not even pausing in his stride, and didn't stop until he saw a familiar black-scaled form surrounded by Zipplebacks, and what looked like a sub-species of Changewing. He ignored the itch to get out his sketchbook (he still wasn't anywhere close to recording every type of dragon, a task that had been put away in light of his new duties) and instead waited a few metres away for Toothless to notice him.

Whatever the Zipplebacks were saying, it must have been enthralling, because it took almost ten seconds for Toothless to look away and spot his human standing at the edge of the dirt patch overlooking a

cliff. He made a joyful noise and bounded over.

"H-Hey, bud!" Hiccup laughed as he hugged Toothless' massive head, skinny arms tight around a thick neck. "I haven't seen you in a while, you alright?"

Toothless made a low crooning noise and looked up at him with large eyes. "Yeah, I know you're sorry," Hiccup sighed. He rubbed slow circles behind Toothless' ear. "I'm sorry too. We haven't made much time for each other, have we?"

Toothless chirped, and Hiccup grinned. "Well, don't worry about it. What do you say, bud? Wanna go flying?"

Toothless bounced up and down once, twice, three times, giving his signature toothless smile the whole time. Hiccup laughed and tugged gently on one of the frills surrounding his face. "Well, come on!" he said, turning and jogging towards the other end of the village. "Our riding gear is still at the house, remember?"

He heard a brief pounding of dragon footsteps before he was unceremoniously scooped up over Toothless' head to rest on his neck, and then they were running through the village. It must have been quite a sight: the Chief of Berk, laughing crazily as he clung to his sprinting Night Fury, the both of them almost flying through the paths of Berk towards the Chief's home.

Hiccup sprung off Toothless' back when they skidded to a stop in front of his home, and he rushed inside, followed closely by his dragon. Valka was at home, for once; for all that she was acclimatising to living among humans again after twenty years, she still preferred to spend most of her time outside, usually with dragons. When Hiccup burst through the front door, she jumped to her feet and smiled reflexively at the sight of Hiccup's crazed grin. "What's happening?" she asked.

"Nothing, everything's fine!" Hiccup shouted over his shoulder as he scaled the stairs and started digging through his room. "Me and Toothless are just taking the afternoon off!" He spied the bright red fabric of Toothless' prosthetic fin and hauled it out from under the pile of furs that had somehow been thrown over top of it. He gathered up the fin and all the gear attached to it, including the saddle, then looked around his room properly. "Actually, we'll probably be gone until tomorrow!" he called out. He heard loud footsteps on the stairs, and then two heads peered through the doorway.

"Where are you going?" Valka asked with a slight frown. Hiccup whirled around and grinned, arms full of equipment.

"I don't know!" he said gleefully. He pushed past the woman and the dragon crowding the doorway and headed for the front door, still hanging open from their abrupt entrance. "Astrid's going to be Chief while I'm gone," he told Valka as he made his way down the stairs, still uncertain in his gait on the steep steps even after five years. "She probably won't need it, but I thought you could help her? Since you probably know a lot about Chief stuff, having beenâ€¦"

Having been a Chief's wife. Valka smiled sadly. "She probably won't need the help," she agreed. "She's got a good head on her shoulders. She'd be a natural. But I'll give her some pointers anyway."

Hiccup nodded, and just like when he'd talked to Astrid, another spark was kindled in the base of a new idea forming in the back of his head. "Thanks, Mom. I'll see you soon," he said, and accepted the awkward hug that his mother gave him. She was still more used to affectionate gestures meant for dragons, but then again, so was Hiccup, more or less.

Outside, he could barely get the gear on Toothless, the dragon was so excited. "Stop wiggling, will you?" Hiccup laughed as he missed the buckle on the saddle for the third time. Finally the equipment was hooked up, and Hiccup flipped the switch on his prosthetic to convert to the Riding Mode, as he'd deemed it. He swung up into the saddle and instantly felt the stress melt off him " and they weren't even in the air yet!

"You ready, bud?" he said. Toothless let out a happy growl and they both crouched low before shooting upwards, Toothless pumping his wings hard, Hiccup holding on tight.

For hours they just flew, doing all the aerial tricks and stunts they had perfected, including Hiccup actually being able to catch Hiccup when he used his flying apparatus, now. It wasn't until the sun started to touch the horizon that Hiccup realised how far they'd flown " there was no sight of land beneath them, only a dark smudge that may have been an island on the horizon.

"Let's head over there, Toothless!" he called, leaning low on his friend's neck and pointing to the smudge. Toothless immediately straightened his course. "Too bad I don't know where we are" this is probably a new island. Wonder if the dragons are friendly there?"

Toothless made a deep rumbling noise, and Hiccup could hear his words as clearly as if the dragon had been speaking Norse: If they aren't, I will take care of them.

"Toothless!" Hiccup scolded, flicking his ear lightly. Toothless shook his head and glared over his shoulder.

The smudge grew larger as the sun dipped lower, and by the time the moon was lighting the waters, they could see that it was indeed a fair-sized island, around the size of the supposed "Island of Night Furies" they had been captured on years ago. They landed on a long stretch of beach, Hiccup having spied a shallow cave that they could sleep in, far enough back from the shoreline that it wouldn't flood when the tide rose. Immediately he unhooked Toothless' saddle, piling the gear in the cave as Toothless rolled in the sand, scratching his itchy scales. "I'm gonna go get some firewood, okay bud?" he called out. Toothless crooned out an acknowledgement, eyes closed blissfully, and Hiccup wandered into the woods.

When he returned with an armful of sticks in various sizes, Toothless was sitting in the mouth of the cave, scales gleaming wet and a heap of fish piled proudly at his feet. "Aww, you caught me dinner?" Hiccup said with a grin. "Thanks, bud!" Toothless got an extra-long scratch behind his frills for that one after Hiccup dumped the kindling in his arms. He directed Toothless to shoot a very small burst of flame at the base of the kindling-pyre he'd constructed, and together they settled around the fire, Toothless dozing, Hiccup

leaning against him, roasting a fish slowly over the flames. The only sounds him were Toothless' breathing, the gentle crashing of the small waves on the shore, the crackle of the fire and the quiet noises of insects in the woods behind him. No squabbling Vikings, no angry dragon chatter, no demands to act like the leader he was born to be — the leader he now was. Nothing here except him and Toothless, the way he knew it was meant to be.

The way it was always meant to be.

* * *

><p>Valka was right; Astrid was a natural at being Chief.<p>

In the way she handled the people of Berk, Valka could see strains of Stoick's even-handedness and rationality, blended with an optimism and cleverness she knew to be learnt from Hiccup. And all this, of course, was joined by the diplomacy and knowledge of exactly what to say that Astrid naturally possessed. Combined, they gave Astrid a remarkable talent for solving interpersonal difficulties quickly and with minimal bloodshed. This was helped by the fact that Astrid commanded no little amount of respect within the village; she had been Berk's most formidable warrior trainee for years, and once the war with dragons had ended, she had become one of the most talented riders on the island. Valka had assured the young Viking that any administrative business could wait until Hiccup returned, and that she herself would handle any issues that the dragons may have in their Alpha's absence (with Cloudjumper's aid), so her day as Chief went completely free of struggles.

All of this made for the calmest day that the island of Berk had seen since Drago's Alpha had risen up out of the ocean to blast ice upon the village. So it wasn't entirely surprising when Hiccup was greeted the way he was when he and Toothless returned late the day after they'd left.

"Congratulations on finding your own replacement, Hiccup!" Alrek cheered from the small crowd gathered around the pair.

"You've chosen well!" Phlegma added. Several around her nodded. Hiccup exchanged a confused look with Toothless.

"What are you talking about?" he asked. "I don't have a —" He paused. "Wait, you mean _Astrid?_"

"She's a right natural, she is!" Halla said. "I always told my Harald that our dear departed Stoick would be a fool not to take Astrid on as his heir if you ever got yourself killed."

"Thanks?" Hiccup said. "So you guys really think she'd make a good Chief?"

"I _am _a good Chief," a new voice interrupted. The crowd parted as Astrid swaggered forward, axe swinging with her stride. "How was your trip?"

"Relaxing," Hiccup replied honestly. "Thanks for suggesting it. We really needed that, didn't we bud?" he added, twisting to rub the scales below Toothless' chin. Astrid grabbed his chin gently in one hand and turned his head so she could kiss him on the lips, softly.

Toothless gave a disappointed chirp at Astrid having distracted Hiccup, and Astrid laughed before giving the dragon a quick scratch.

"So, you enjoyed being Chief?" Hiccup asked. The crowd had drifted away by now, and Toothless broke away with an apologetic look to Hiccup as various dragons came looking to see their Alpha again.

"Honestly? Yeah, I really did," Astrid replied. She looked over the village with a smile. "Doing these duties just reminded me of how much I _love_these people, you know? Being a dragon rider is important, but I like helping people in a moreâ€¦ I don't knowâ€¦"

"Personal sort of way?" Hiccup suggested. Astrid nodded. "My dad used to say that," Hiccup continued softly. "I guess you really are meant to be Chief."

Astrid looked at him with concern and put a hand on the back of his neck. "You're our Chief, Hiccup," she said seriously. "These people love you. The _dragons_ love you. Everyone on this island thinks that you're meant to be Chief."

"I don't," Hiccup corrected her. He grabbed the hand on his neck and held it tightly in both of his own, looking at her with pleading eyes. "Astrid, I'm good at being Chief, butâ€¦ I don't think that it's what I'm meant to be, to _do_." He looked away, and she knew without turning that he was looking at Toothless. "Iâ€¦ Iâ€¦"

He seemed lost for words, and to Astrid's horror, tiny tears began to build in his eyes. She lifted her free hand and rested it on his cheek, forcing him to look at her.

"Hiccup, it's okay," she said gently. "I know yourâ€¦" She took a deep breath and continued, "Your dad wanted you to be Chief. But Hiccup, he wouldn't be disappointed. No one on Berk would be, and no one would think that you were a coward, or weak, or anything else that you're calling yourself right now. It's okay, Hiccup," she repeated. "Your dad would be proud of you, no matter what."

There was a soft crooning noise behind her, and then Toothless was padding up to Hiccup, nosing at the side of his face. Hiccup sighed, then dropped Astrid's hand, only to cover her other hand with one of his, while his other hand reached up to rest on Toothless' nose. "You're both amazing, you know that?" he said softly.

"Yes," she informed him, as Toothless nodded. Hiccup laughed, a brief, soft sound, but it was still a laugh. He swiped at his nose and shook himself in a gesture that made him look strangely like his dragon, then smiled at them both.

"Okay," he said, and his voice was steady once more. "Tell me what I missed, Chief."

* * *

><p>Hiccup remained Chief. Mostly.<p>

He continued on in his Chiefly duties, although he now referred the

thornier interpersonal issues to Astrid. Now that he knew he could leave the island in Astrid's hands completely without her getting overwhelmed, he and Toothless started disappearing for longer and longer; at first, only for a day or two, but within a month, they were flying off for almost a week at a time. Hiccup always arrived back filled with remorse when he realised how long they'd been gone, but both Astrid and Valka (along with the rest of the village) waved off his apologies.

"I told you that you have the soul of a dragon, Hiccup," Valka told him over dinner the night he returned from a six-day-long trip. "Everyone can sense it in you. They know that you can't remain ground-bound for long."

"I should be here for my people," Hiccup argued, poking sullenly at his mutton. Valka sighed, and leant forward.

"I was like you, Hiccup," she said wistfully. "I assume your father told you that I was once a traveller." Hiccup nodded. Stoick hadn't been very talkative about the subject of his wife, but he had mentioned a few things, including his mother's worldly adventures. "In the tribe I grew up in, they called it the Wanderlust. It was like a spark in your belly, the urge to just- get out, to see everything there was for yourself. The spark faded from me some ten years ago, Hiccup, but you are young. The Wanderlust is not a bad thing," she concluded gently. "You cannot force it down; you can only feed it."

Hiccup could picture it; soaring above completely foreign lands on Toothless' back, hearing languages they could never imagine, finding dragons that they could never dream of. And it terrified him, that he could so easily imagine leaving his home, his friends, his mother, Astrid, for so long.

But the spark in his belly that she had spoken of with such familiarity had roared to life at his imaginings, and it almost hurt to think of staying on Berk, being Chief, only being able to escape for a few days at a time. All of a sudden it felt like a life in chains; a ground-bound existence.

"I couldn't leave you guys behind," he said finally, but it sounded insincere even to his own ears. Valka just smiled sadly and covered one of his hands with her own.

"Hiccup," she said, "I think you already have."

2. The Dancing Dragon Chief of Berk

Sososo sorry for the delay! My motivation died a painful death. I've actually had this sitting in my hard drive for a week or two now - I wanted to have this be a two-shot, but since I don't seem to be able to write anything beyond the end of this chapter for now, I'll save it for chapter three. Whenever that happens. But don't give up hope! It may happen! Just... probably not any time soon. Sorry about that. READ ONWARDS!

* * *

><p>It seemed as if the entire human population of Berk (and a fair

amount of the dragon population) was present in the Great Hall at noon, crowded around the fire-pit and craning their necks to see the person speaking " the person who had called the meeting.<p>

"As you all know, Astrid has been taking the role of Chief in my" while I've been away," Hiccup said awkwardly, voice echoing through the hall. "Many of you have told me that she is an excellent replacement for me. So I hope that you'll all be happy to know that" He looked down at his hands. Next to him, Astrid bumped their shoulders together, a gentle reminder of her support. He took a deep breath and continued, "To know that, with Gothi's permission, I have decided to give up the title of Chief, on the condition that it will be passed to Astrid."

There was silence, and a few Vikings fidgeted. Hiccup sighed. "You can cheer," he said. They did so, and Hiccup smiled despite himself, while Astrid just rolled her eyes.

"That's not all he has to say!" she called, and the crowd quietened. She nudged Hiccup again. "Go on, then," she encouraged. He looked around at the faces of the people he'd known since childhood and briefly regretted not allowing Toothless to join them in the Hall; he'd need all the strength he possessed to say these next words.

"I've made this decision because I'm-" He swallowed convulsively. "I'm leaving."

He waited for the inevitable confused yells and shouted questions, but they never came. Instead, the occupants of the Hall simply nodded, murmuring to each other in a decidedly not-confused manner.

"We all knew it would happen sooner or later," Gobber said wisely. Spitelout nodded, adding,

"I'm surprised you haven't taken off sooner!"

The crowd voiced their agreement, and Hiccup's head spun with confusion. "You" you all knew?" he said. Gobber, seeing his distress, took pity and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, you have been flying off to make that map of yours for months now," he pointed out. "Spitelout's right " it's a miracle you've stuck around this long."

Hiccup shook his head, his heart warring between relief and betrayal. "So, so you're all just, okay with this?" he demanded. Gobber squeezed his shoulder.

"You've done well by your tribe, Hiccup," he said, not unkindly. "You've been a good Chief, and you've given us an excellent successor. And it's not like you're leaving forever," he added. "Right?"

"No, right, of course I'm not," Hiccup said hurriedly. "Just six months. Seven, maybe. A year at the most."

"That's comforting," Phlegma muttered.

"He'll be back before next summer season," Astrid interjected. She stepped closer and added, slightly threateningly, "_Won't _you?"

"Yes, yes, definitely," Hiccup replied, eyes widening. Astrid gave him a smug grin.

"We'll have to throw a party to send you off, Dragon Chief!" Spitelout said, giving him a hearty pat on the back. Despite having hit a much needed growth spurt in the last few years, the "hearty pat" still send Hiccup stumbling forward, much to everyone's amusement. The crowd began to file out of the hall, chattering about party preparations and gossiping, leaving Hiccup and Astrid to watch them go. At least, he thought so, until someone stepped up to his other side and punched him on the shoulder.

"Ow! What is with you people and the punching?" he demanded. Snotlout shrugged.

"You couldn't have told us you were leaving _before _you held a meeting about it?" he said, sounding almost hurt. Behind him, the twins and Fishlegs nodded their agreement. Hiccup waved his hands inarticulately.

"I only made up my mind about it last night!" he said indignantly. "Only Astrid and my mom knew, before now!"

"Oh, please," Ruffnut broke in. "Everyone's known for years that you're gonna leave."

"Yeah, we're just mad you didn't tell us before you told everyone," Tuffnut continued. "Whatever happened to special privileges? I thought we were dragon bros, man."

"_Years_? But I- oh, never mind," Hiccup said. "Look, does it matter?"

"Uh, does it matter that you totally betrayed our friendship? _Duh_, " Snotlout said. "Whatever. Like I care," he added, in a voice that said he very much cared, before skulking away, Ruffnut and Tuffnut bickering in his wake. Fishlegs went to follow but hesitated.

"I guess I'll see you at the party, then," he said, fidgeting, before hurrying after the others.

* * *

><p>The party was, in true Berkian Viking style, both incredibly lavish and incredibly loud. They'd broken out all the food they could spare, with winter only a few months away, and cracked open a few barrels of mead to celebrate. Although the party was ostensibly to send Hiccup off, it was also to celebrate Astrid's official crowning as Chief of Berk. Hiccup grinned as he bowed slightly to Astrid, the rest of the village copying him, making Astrid's cheeks turn red. In revenge, she'd waited until the majority of the villagers had wished Hiccup safe travels, and then dragged him to the table housing the mead barrels, sweetly talking him into matching her as she drained a full mug. Within half an hour he was giddy with the drink, laughing under the lanterns strung up on the ceiling of the Great Hall.<p>

"I should've known you wouldn't be able to hold your drink," Valka sighed as he spun his way through the crowd to where she was standing at the edge of the hall. He shook his head and peered around, squinting.

"Where's Cloudjumper? He not like parties?" he asked.

"He's a bit big for these things, I'm afraid. Toothless is around, is he not?" she asked idly. Hiccup laughed suddenly, falling backwards to lean against the wall.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Astrid says I'm not allowed to, to hang around with him, since he's gonna have me all to himself tomorrow," he explained. He glanced around again, then added in a conspiring whisper, "I think she's jealous."

"Is that so?" Valka replied, amusement seeping into her voice. Hiccup nodded, putting on a stern expression.

"Don't tell her I said so," he continued, still whispering. Valka winked.

"It'll be our secret," she said. "But just in case, I think you'd better go dance with her." She pushed him off the wall and aimed him back into the heart of the crowd, where she could see Astrid spinning around with Fishlegs in a dance. Hiccup beamed at her.

"You're _so smart_!" he crowed happily, before folding her into a tight hug. She chuckled and patted his back.

It took a few minutes for him to make his unsteady way through the crush of Vikings, but eventually he tumbled into the slightly open area designated for dancing. Astrid spotted him immediately, but waited for the song to end before she wandered over to him.

"You going to ask me something?" she said, crossing her arms.

"Yes! Yes, Astrid, yes, you're so smart too!" Hiccup sighed. Astrid smothered a laugh at the sight of him so loose â€" she didn't think she'd seen him drink this much before, ever. He probably hadn't had more than a few sips of alcohol in his life, before tonight. "I was going to ask you to dance! C'mon, let's dance!"

"Okay, okay!" she laughed, letting Hiccup catch her up in his arms and spin them among the other dancing pairs. Muddled by the drink as he was, she almost felt as if she were dancing with the Hiccup of five years ago â€" she could clearly remember him being terribly clumsy and uncoordinated, tripping over thin air and injuring himself on a regular basis. Here and now, Hiccup tried to do a more complicated step-change and ended up tripping Astrid, letting out a shocked noise as she fell on top of him with a shout.

Around them, the other dancers laughed, and after a moment of staring at each other, she and Hiccup began to laugh too, until soon enough they were both in hysterics. Maybe Astrid wasn't quite as capable of holding her drink as she'd led Hiccup to believe.

After another minute of laughter, she finally wiped the tears from her eyes and stood, offering a hand to Hiccup. They stood grinning at each other for a few seconds before Hiccup's eyes dropped to her

lips, and she leaned in, closing her eyes-

And was unceremoniously bumped out of the way by a large, scaly form. She put her hands on her hips and watched Toothless plant himself in front of Hiccup, head cocked to one side as Hiccup pointed a finger in his face.

"Toothless! I told you not to come up to me! You know Astrid is-" He glanced over at her, then said in what he clearly thought was a whisper, "_jealous_."

Astrid's eyes narrowed. "Oh, hey Toothless," she said casually. "Well, if you're gonna hang out with Hiccup now, I might go dance withâ€¦" She scanned the people around her, and grinned when she spotted her prey. "Snotlout!"

The man in question looked up from where he'd been arguing with Tuffnut at the edge of the dance area as she stalked towards him. He'd never quite recovered from the time she'd actually agreed to go out with him when they were younger; a reflexive flash of fear appeared on his face for a moment when she grabbed his hand. "What are you doing?" he demanded as she dragged him away from Tuffnut. She looked over her shoulder and fluttered her eyelashes at him. He gulped.

"I'm dancing with you, numbskull!" she said with a laugh.

A few metres away, Hiccup was scowling at his dragon, who was still looking down at him innocently. "Well, what do you want, bud?" he asked, not being able to resist giving his friend a quick scratch under the chin. "You're not gonna ask me to dance, are you?"

Toothless chirped, then did a quick jumping-step around Hiccup, lifting a wing to the man's chest as he did so in a pantomime of the couples surrounding them, who were spinning on each other's arms. Pushing down his surprise at a dragon copying a Viking dance, Hiccup grinned, then schooled his features into a stern expression.

"Not bad, not bad," he said, tapping a finger to his chin, "but I reckon I could teach you some things." Toothless dropped his head to nose at Hiccup's jaw, and Hiccup pushed him away, laughing. "C'mon, bud, lemme show you something. You were doing a couple's dance, I'll show you a friendship dance, okay?"

It was something his dad had only taught him in the past few years; before then, Hiccup had never had cause nor ability to learn the different dances of their tribe. He swallowed back a wash of sadness at the memory of his dad carefully demonstrating the steps of this dance, and squared his shoulders.

"Well, first we bow to each other," he said, lowering his body in an exaggerated bow. Toothless snorted, then dipped low as well, spreading his wings behind him and making others duck out of the way. A few were watching them now, no doubt intrigued by the spectacle of a Viking teaching a dragon how to dance. "Good! Now, we â€" uh, clasp hands. Okay, so this probably isn't going to work."

Undaunted, Toothless lifted a paw, holding it as if he was about to shake Hiccup's hand, but instead used it to bump Hiccup square in the

chest pushing him back a few paces. He could hear Astrid laughing behind him, and straightened up with determination.

"Alright, Toothless, you want to dance?" he said loudly. Toothless bounced a few times, tongue lolling out of his mouth in excitement. "Then show me how a dragon dances!"

* * *

><p>He awoke the next morning to the feeling of Loki himself driving spears of fire through his head. He groaned, flailing a hand out and frowning when it didn't come into contact with a blanket. He shivered. "Toothless," he tried to say, only for it to emerge as a dry croak. When the pain in his skull dulled slightly, he pulled himself slowly upright, frowning as he realised that his prosthetic leg was still attached, and he was still wearing his flight gear. Also, that he appeared to be on the floor of the Great Hall.<p>

Looking around, he saw other Berkians lying on the stone floor, some still snoring, others moaning quietly, looking much like he suspected he himself did. And then it all rushed back to him in painfully clear detail, only slightly fuzzy from how muddled he'd been from the alcohol. He groaned, a loud and pitiful noise. Gods, it was a good thing he'd already made Astrid chief â€" no one would take him seriously after what he'd done last night.

Gingerly, he rolled to his good knee, stretching an arm out to steady himself on the floor-

"Ah!" There was a massive bruise on his shoulder, and the pain in the muscle suddenly outweighed the pain in his head, bringing the injury forcefully to his attention. He limped towards the doors of the hall, heaving them open and squinting in the dull brightness of an overcast morning.

"Ah, there's our Dancing Dragon Chief!"

Hiccup groaned again, burying his face in his hands. "I really did that, didn't I?" he mumbled. Gobber chuckled and flung an arm around his shoulder.

"If by _that_ _you mean 'made up a dance with your dragon and then declared that every dragon rider should learn it', then yes," he replied cheerfully.

"We were all very impressed," a distressingly familiar voice called out. Astrid was walking up the hill, Toothless trailing behind her like a faithful hunting dog. "Especially when you tried to do a flip over his back and landed on your shoulder."

The bruise on his arm throbbed. "Good to know that's how I'll be remembered around here," he muttered. Toothless nosed the side of his head and he nudged the dragon away gently. "Do you know where my mom is? We'll be heading off soon, and I have to say goodbye." The word soured in his mouth. Gobber wordlessly gestured in the direction Astrid had come from. He began to head off, but paused and turned back to the two Vikings.

"Are they really calling me-"

"The Dancing Dragon Chief of Berk!" they both chorused at him, before breaking into extremely un-Viking giggles. Hiccup threw his hands up and stalked away.

"I'm not even Chief anymore, you know!" he yelled back at them. Toothless crooned a concerned noise and nosed at him again, making him stumble on the dewy grass.

There was a flock of Nadders on the edge of the village, two of them standing taller and bulkier than the others, and Hiccup could see his mother standing in the centre. She caught his eye when he and Toothless were a few metres away and carefully picked her way past the finicky dragons. "So, I suppose this is it, then," she said, slightly awkwardly. It was nice to finally know where he'd gotten his social skills from, at least.

"Only for a while," he said, rubbing a hand through his hair. "Astrid'll kill me if I'm not back before summer. And, I mean, I wouldn't stay away that long," he added hastily. "Obviously."

"Obviously," Valka echoed. They stood in silence for a few seconds before Toothless nudged him for a third time.

"I think he's impatient to leave," Hiccup said sheepishly. Valka gave him a thin smile.

"Well, we don't want to make him wait, do we?"

They'd be taking off from the cliff where Toothless had driven off Drago's alpha, and where Hiccup had been crowned as Chief; the tall shards of ice had been left standing as a memorial of sorts. The majority of Berkians were already back to their duties, so there were only a few who were gathered to say goodbye. The others had all wished him luck at the party. There were also a few dragons, although Hiccup assumed Toothless had spent the morning talking to the dragon population as a whole.

Gobber was the first to approach him, and Hiccup endured one last painful shoulder pat. "Good luck out there, lad," he said, unusually sober. "You'll make your father proud, I know it."

"Thanks, Gobber," Hiccup replied, and a second later he was being lifted into a back-breaking hug. "Ack-! Gobber!"

The blacksmith put him down, loudly sniffing. "Sorry. Good luck," he repeated, and then stepped back to allow Snotlout, Fishlegs and the twins forward.

"You've got your journal, right?" Fishlegs said anxiously. "You'll probably find a tonne of new dragons, so make sure to record everything so we can put them in our books-"

"Screw the journal, just bring me back some cool dragons," Tuffnut interjected. "Maybe ones with like, three heads."

"Bring me back some too, so I don't have to share with him," Ruffnut added, shoving her brother away. This devolved into a brief fist fight, during which Snotlout shuffled closer and grabbed Hiccup

into the quickest, most uncomfortable hug of his life.

"So. Yeah. You should probably come back some time," his cousin said, pointedly avoiding eye contact. Hiccup nodded in bemusement.

Finally, Astrid came forward, swaggering into his personal space. "Just remember to be careful," she warned, humour dancing in her eyes. "Toothless!" she called out. The dragon jumped off the ice spike where he'd been perching and ran to her, closing his eyes blissfully as she scratched behind his frills. "Take care of, alright?" she told the dragon, who made an agreeable sort of noise. "And try to remember to come back," she continued, now turning back to Hiccup.

"I will, I promise," he said, holding up his hands in surrender. She eyed him, then said,

"Well, just to make sure you don't forgetâ€¦" And she pulled him down by the front of his flight gear and kissed him, hard. She pulled away after what seemed like hours and grinned at him. "So now you won't forget, right?"

"Right," he agreed, dazed. Toothless huffed, breaking him out of his trance. "Uh, right, yeah, so, this is it. I'm leaving. Now. Okay."

"Go, Hiccup," Valka chided. She gave Toothless one last rub across his nose and ran her other hand through Hiccup's hair, then pushed them both towards the ice spire.

And just like that, the spark of Wanderlust ignited in Hiccup's chest. He vaulted himself onto Toothless' back, clicking his leg into place even as his dragon raced for the highest point of the ice, spreading his wings and crouching low.

"You ready for this, bud?" Hiccup called, grinning wildly. Toothless roared, shooting a blast of plasma into the sky before they flew upwards, climbing for the clouds, and Hiccup couldn't stop laughing if he tried. This was what he lived for, this was what he was meant to do, to be. He loved Berk, but being in the sky with Toothless; that was where he was home.

End
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